



PLAIN TALK for Parents

About Your Three- to Four-Year-Old Child

Every child and parent is unique. This information highlights patterns of growth and development that apply to most children. As you watch, listen to, and play with your child, you'll discover when she or he is ready for new activities and skills. You'll find your own ways to use old and new ideas to fit your personality, your family, and your child's needs.

GENERAL TRAITS

- Enjoys walking, running, jumping, riding, climbing.
- Likes activities such as play dough, blocks & cars, drawing, simple puzzles.
- Stuttering, nail biting, thumb sucking are normal.
- Likes to ask questions: Why? How? What? When?
- Wants to do everything a certain way. Likes routines.
- Many children are consistently dry, at least in the daytime.
- Occasionally reverts to babylike behavior.
- Friends are extremely important, but skills in dealing with them are few.
- Make-believe play is beginning.

WHAT A PARENT CAN DO

- Allow your child to talk about feelings. Help by giving names to feelings such as sad or happy.
- Find ways for your child to spend time with other children such as a weekly playtime with two or three friends of the same age.
- Find a regular time to read & look at books.
- Be consistent with rules.
- Encourage independence with simple tasks. Your child may be able to help with dinner by washing vegetables, tearing lettuce or setting the table.

- Teach the importance of privacy. Practice showing (like a game) that a shut door requires respect & a knock may gain entrance.
- Don't worry if your child dislikes certain foods. Offer small food portions with a choice, if possible.
- Give short simple answers to your child's questions about sex, as you do to questions about other things.

TOYS FOR THE 3- TO 4-YEAR-OLD

- Cars & trucks
- Puzzles with 6-8 pieces
- Dolls & teddy bears
- Musical toys
- Riding toys
- Play dough & finger paints
- Costume box: hats, gloves, clothes, pocketbooks
- Soap bubbles & a straw for blowing
- Colored paper, paste, blunt scissors
- Books
- Balls
- Variety of blocks
- Pegs & pegboard
- Crayons & large pencils

This material was adapted from St. Mary's Hospital Medical Center Guide to Health with their permission.

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